

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are all of the pending claims.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thomas et al. (US 5,607,259) in view of Howard et al. (US 2,148,427).

Claims 10 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Howard in view of Conrad (US 2,093,881).

Claim 1

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of independent claim 1 at least because there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet all of the claim's recitations. For example, there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet the claimed method in which:

an internal chamfer (16) and an external chamfer (15) which are separated by a projection (17) having thickness T are produced at each of the longitudinal edges (11, 12) of the at least one reinforcement (8, 8', 9, 9', 10, 10'),

at least one welding pass is carried out at the internal portion of each of the longitudinal edges (11, 12) of the at least one reinforcement (8, 8', 9, 9', 10, 10') in order to produce an internal weld bead (23) having a connection radius R which is greater than or equal to 4 mm, and

the chamfers are filled at the external portion of each of the longitudinal edges (11, 12) of the at least one reinforcement (8, 8', 9, 9', 10, 10') by an external weld bead which is produced in at least one pass with addition of metal.

See, for example, the exemplary embodiment in FIGS. 3 and 4 in which the chamfers 15, 16, are separated by the projection 17, and *both* internal and external weld beads 23, 24 provided at the chamfers 15, 16.

The Examiner acknowledges that Thomas does not disclose the claimed method in which each of the longitudinal edges of the at least one reinforcement includes both an internal chamfer and an external chamfer. Therefore, the Examiner looks to Howard.

However, Howard does not make up for this deficiency in Thomas. Thomas merely discloses that the bracket 13 is perpendicular to the wall 10. There are no features in Thomas that could reasonably be considered *internal and external chamfers* that separated by a projection and with weld beads, let alone internal and external chamfers provided *at each of the longitudinal ends of a reinforcement plate*.

Moreover, regarding the radius R, the figures of Thomas are schematic views and there is no indication that they are drawn to any scale. Therefore, one of ordinary skill would not be able to conclude that the radius is greater than or equal to 4 mm. Moreover, nothing in the document suggests that the radius would be greater than 4 mm.¹

Finally, according to the process of Thomas, each stiffener is welded on the rectangular plate, under a vacuum and from the exterior by means of an electron beam (see Column 2, lines 28-31). This process is designed to avoid drawbacks resulting from the conventional welding process such as automatic welding under flux (see column 1, lines 50-67). In contrast, Howard describes a welding method dated February 28, 1939. At that time, electron beam welding did

¹ See MPEP § 2125.

not exist, and the welding process was less efficient than in 1994, the year in which Thomas was filed. Therefore, there is no reason for one which is skilled in the art to use the process of Thomas in place of the process of Howard.

Thus, for at least the reasons discussed above, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of independent claim 1.

Claims 2-9

Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 2-9 are patentable at least because of their dependency from claim 1.

Claim 10

With respect to device claim 10, Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection at least because there is no reasonable combination of Howard and Conrad that would meet all of the claim's recitations. For example, there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet the claimed device including a welding head (27) *constituted by a nozzle (28) and a chamfer guide (29)*.

There is no disclosure in either Howard or Conrad that could reasonably be considered as corresponding to a chamfer guide. For example, the welding apparatus of Conrad merely includes a liquid flux tube 12 and a filler rod 6. There is no chamfer guide.

Thus, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of independent claim 10.

Claim 11

Regarding claim 11, Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection at least because there is no reasonable combination of Howard and Conrad that would meet all of the claim's recitations.

The combination asserted by the Examiner is based on hindsight and there is no reason of record to combine Howard and Conrad in such a way that would meet the recited device.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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